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ABSTRACT

This paper is the fifth in an Education Commission of the States (ECS) series focusing on the problems of youth at risk of not successfully making the transition to adulthood. The topic of the paper is collaboration--both interagency and public/private--and the contribution that collaborative efforts can make in programs targeted for youth at-risk. ECS conducted a 50-state survey of state-initiated programs for youth at risk of school failure. More than 700 telephone interviews were conducted with deputy commissioners of education, agency and department program directors and youth services practitioners. Issues concerning at-risk youth are raised through the examination of some ongoing statewide collaboration. The issue of how states can capitalize on existing resources is explored. Appended is a list of ECS members, staff, and cooperating organizations. (SI)

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Community of Purpose: Promoting Collaboration Through State Action

YOUTH AT RISK

EA 021 000

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COMMUNITY OF PURPOSE - PROMOTING COLLABORATION THROUGH STATE ACTION

by

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February 1988

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The Education Commission of the States is a nonprofit, nationwide interstate compact formed in 1965. The primary purpose of the commission is to help governors, state legislators, state education officials and others develop policies to improve the quality of education at all levels. Forty-eight states, the District of Columbia, American Samoa, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands are members. The ECS central offices are at 1860 Lincoln Street, Suite 300, Denver, Colorado 80295. The Washington office is in the Hall of the States, 444 North Capitol Street, Suite 248, Washington, DC 20001.

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"Leadership is not a bland relationship. It is not without tension and conflict. One must not suppose that the ideal consists of leaders and constituents so deferential to one another that nothing happens. The ideal is leadership strong enough to propose clear directions and followers strong enough to criticize and amend -- and finally, enough community of purpose to resolve disputes and move on."

John Gardner
No Easy Victories

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In May 1987, the Education Commission of the States, the Council of Chief State School Officers and the National Alliance of Business convened the Working Party for Building Collaborative Strategies to Serve Youth At Risk. The group was chaired by Arkansas First Lady, Hillary Rodham Clinton and was attended by 22 representatives from national organizations, foundations and federal, state and local governments that have made commitments to address the educational and social problems of youth at-risk. We appreciate the working party's effort to outline elements of successful collaborative strategies for youth at-risk. (The list of working party members is found in Appendix A.)

Between June and November 1987, ECS conducted a 50-state survey of state-initiated programs for youth at risk of school failure. More than 700 telephone interviews were conducted with deputy commissioners of education, agency and department program directors and youth services practitioners. ECS appreciates the time these individuals took from their busy schedules to share information about their collaborative projects. (Many of their efforts are reported in Appendix B.) We are especially grateful for the candid responses we received on questions such as the frustrations of and barriers to collaboration and methods for developing an effective collaborative process. Special thanks to the Deputy Commissioners Network of the Council of Chief State School Officers for their help in identifying persons to contact.

In December 1987, ECS and the Interstate Migrant Education Council co-sponsored the National Forum for Youth At Risk. Over 500 participants of the forum were asked to do more than observe panel discussions and general sessions. They were asked to contribute by developing strategies for meeting the needs of at-risk youth. One recommendation for state action from those who participated was that a collaborative effort involving parents, the community and the schools was a necessary component in any strategy addressing the needs of at-risk youth. We appreciate the enthusiasm with which the groups completed their task and the obvious commitment they showed to serving children and youth.

The authors would like to thank Frank Newman, Robert Palaich, Sherry Walker, Rexford Brown, Barbara Lindner, Patrick Callan, Sue Bechard, Van Dougherty and Beverly Anderson for comments on earlier drafts of the paper. Also special thanks to Judi Nicholes for her support and assistance in the preparation of the document.

FOREWORD

This paper is the fifth of an Education Commission of the States (ECS) series focusing on the problems of youth at risk of not successfully making the transition to adulthood - the dropout, the underachiever and far too many others of our young people who end up disconnected from school and society. The topic of this paper is collaboration, both inter-agency and public/private. Collaboration is a circumstance frequently sought but rarely easy to implement. A topic that frequently causes confusion and frustration as state policymakers pick and choose programs to fashion a state strategy for youth at-risk. Which agency is in charge of what program? How can we be sure that additional funds are going to the kids, not the bureaucracy?

This paper is designed to highlight elements of established collaborative programs in the States. The paper is meant to raise awareness of the contribution that collaborative efforts can make in programs targeted for youth at-risk. The goal is to force state policymakers to see the utility of incorporating collaboration into their youth at-risk strategy. The authors gave voice to the concerns identified by many of those running programs that could benefit from further collaboration.

Esther Rodriguez is a Policy Analyst at the Commission. She has taught in the Denver Public Schools and in conjunction with her more recent work as an attorney, has developed a keen insight to the difficulties of agency collaboration. E. Patrick McQuaid is a former Senior Writer with the Commission. His interest in the at-risk issue was developed as a reporter covering this issue for local newspapers. Ruth A. Rosauer is a Research Assistant at the Commission.

We would like to thank the persons and organizations that have made this paper and this series possible. The Carnegie Corporation of New York and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation have supported the recent work of the ECS At-Risk Project.

Frank Newman
ECS President

Bob Palaich
Project Director

INTRODUCTION

Between June and November 1987, the Education Commission of the States conducted a 50-state survey of state-initiated programs for youth at risk of not acquiring the educational skills and knowledge to prepare them for economic self-sufficiency as adults. These programs covered a broad range of issues, including school dropout prevention, truancy and attendance, substance abuse, teen pregnancy and parenting, early childhood initiatives and suicide prevention. Throughout the states and the District of Columbia, more than 700 telephone interviews were conducted with deputy commissioners of education, agency and department program directors and youth services practitioners. In addition to describing the programs with which they are associated, they discussed their concerns about many issues, including the status of children and youth in their state, the dropout statistics, the economic impact of those statistics on the state, the percentage of youth whose futures are most at stake. Most of those interviewed said collaboration is the key component to a successful child-centered program for youth at risk. They defined collaboration as an ongoing meeting between and among schools, state agencies, state and local government and community organizations to resolve a common problem.

With respect to the at-risk youth issue, there is general agreement that, in principle at least, collaboration makes sense, that it should be stimulated and encouraged. Yet it is proving as complicated in practice as it is elementary in theory. This is because collaboration really is new territory, requiring not only new thinking but new habits of thought.

Collaboration concerns relationships among people--how organizations as well as individuals relate to one another. Just as individuals bring their own set of baggage to any relationship, agencies and organizations have their own private hang-ups, mindsets, behavior patterns and bad habits. Each agency, department or institution harbors its own innate pressures, e.g., restrictive budgets and policies, that fly in the face of collaborative reform efforts. Perhaps an important first step in any collaboration serving the needs of youth is for the individuals who make up an organization to unlearn some of the broad assumptions and biases they carry with them to the council, the conference room or the bargaining table.

Collaboration cannot work without leadership. In his report, Speaking of Leadership, Arkansas Governor Bill Clinton notes that "any and every case study on effective schools is a case study on leadership." Taking that argument one step further, any study on effective schools, any study on leadership, is a study on collaboration. This hypothesis has provided the framework for this research and evaluation.

Recent articles in both the academic and popular presses have provided poignant illustrations of "how the other half lives," placing the larger social questions squarely before the public and deep into the domain of policy development. Missing, however, has been the angle of the teacher or social service provider whose efforts are thwarted by real or perceived bureaucratic constraints and red tape that in the day-to-day welter of things tend to sap innovation.

The experience of those running effective schools serving at-risk youth suggests that faculty in such schools are more likely to share personal motives and common goals. Also, the laying of common objectives with clear direction, set stages of implementation and measured outcomes are easier when the faculty is empowered to make decisions. This kind of situation naturally lends itself to collaborative decision making within a school. The point of this

paper, though, is because the needs of at-risk youngsters are multi-dimensional, collaborative strategies must involve individuals and organizations outside the traditional education community.

Schools are supposed to be learning environments for students. Yet many programs are not child-centered, but seem, rather, to be designed with the ease of administrative maintenance in mind. Within schools, collaborative efforts will result in more effective teaching and improved learning. In a paper for the American Journal of Education, Susan J. Rosenholtz suggests that collaborative decision making brings certain "psychic rewards" that directly translate into student achievement. Ultimately, she writes, "the technology of teaching that is passed along to new recruits will circle back to provide organizational participants with inducements that will encourage them to make contributions."

Before effective programs can be implemented, the barriers to collaboration must be addressed. The structure of state agencies, mindsets, time constraints, limited resources and inflexible policies are some of the roadblocks to collaboration reported by state program directors. One common complaint is that agencies serving youth (for example, education, health and human services, and juvenile justice) do not always offer comprehensive programs for youth at risk. This sometimes results in duplicate services or no services at all.

On the plus side, a safe conclusion is that collaboration is happening in all of the states -- in some by design but in most by default. The consolidation of some state agencies, coupled with a new era in federal-state relations, are forcing collaboration to take place. In those states where collaboration is taking place by intent, there is solid evidence -- backed by reliable data -- of an authentic commitment to meet the needs of all children.

The purpose of this paper is to consider collaboration as a policy tool to manage change better. Collaboration inside the schools promotes teacher growth, better administration, wider involvement and sharper focus. It gives teachers the leverage to direct education reform, rather than endorse or complain about it. Collaboration in a broader sphere brings in outsiders (for example, parents and other service providers such as community based organizations), allowing them new insights into the problems facing education and society. It gives them a chance to make real and lasting contributions.

Some of the issues of at-risk youth will be raised through the examination of some ongoing statewide collaborations. In addition, there will be some exploration on how states in general can capitalize on existing resources.

Why is Collaboration Crucial in the At-Risk Arena?

Collaboration is crucial because service-providers often are unaware of the resources available in the community to help them help kids.

A Teacher's Story

> Twelve years as a public school teacher and extensive post-graduate work in education did not prepare Diana for the day when Susan, a high school senior and state college scholarship applicant, approached her for advice on terminating a pregnancy. "I thought I had it all figured out, after working so many years with kids in the classroom, in the gym and after school," Diana recalls. "It wasn't like that when I was her age and nothing like this ever came up in my course work at college or in graduate school. I suppose the real surprise is that it took this long, that I hadn't run across this sort of thing earlier, or heard about it from other teachers."
>
> There were good reasons why Susan had come to Diana for advice. Whether it was providing tutoring in Hamlet for English class, providing transportation to a school football game or counseling on a career decision, Diana had always shown a deep personal interest in her students. It was appreciated by school administrators and noted in her professional evaluations. She was respected among the faculty and popular among students and their parents. Now she felt caught between her loyalty to Susan, in her role as mentor, and her professional commitment to do what was in the best interests of her employer -- the local school district.
>
> Sex education counseling was clearly an area in which Diana had little expertise, but in this particular case, turning to the school nurse, a guidance counselor or the assistant principal could cost her Susan's confidence. She didn't know who or what agency outside the school could help. What's more, she worried about the legal ramifications of counseling a student on health matters without parental consent.

In recent years, more and more school aged youth are being confronted with non-academic problems that have a grave impact on their education. Concomitantly, more teachers are being asked to provide non-education services.

As part of the at-risk survey, program directors described non-teaching situations confronting school staffs. In New York, Connecticut and Oregon, parole officers, counselors and teachers make up committees to evaluate and screen juveniles for placement in schools and community

programs. In Delaware, Connecticut, Illinois and Washington, teachers, nurses and counselors say their students have asked for -- in some cases, demanded -- information on contraception as well as pre- and post-natal care. Day-care facilities are needed in elementary and secondary schools in New York, Oklahoma and West Virginia, for example. In Alaska, a middle school teacher was stunned to learn that some of her students are homeless, trapped between deprivation and abuse and the only alternative -- being declared a ward of the state. Diana and Susan's story could have been about a caring social worker, nurse, community volunteer or teacher or a story about a young person who is considering suicide -- or leaving school -- or running away from home. However, it is the story of a public servant placed in a role she didn't bargain for and a system of public services too fragmented to help.

The problems are obvious, the solutions are not. "I have found over the years that I can't be everybody's counselor," says a teacher in a Midwest state who faced a similar situation. "But if kids don't feel comfortable with a social worker or counselor in or outside the schools, they are going to come back to the teacher they trust. Kids fear a social worker or counselor will tell others their private business."

One solution is to create a network of the existing resources within the district or community which could be readily accessed by teachers for student referral or help with a problem. "Teachers don't have the solutions to handle the problems, although we are the first ones to get them," says this teacher. "What would help is a team of resources within the community that would work with teachers specifically on what to do and what to say." She adds, "Teachers are thrown into unexpected situations and can't handle them. They are then blamed when, as a result of certain social conditions that have nothing to do with school, kids drop out."

Teachers argue that they are required to take on too many roles. They are not only teacher, but parent, counselor, role-model and social worker. "Somebody, in conjunction with teachers has got to take the responsibility and the risk to help these kids," another teacher argues. "Teachers cannot assume it all. If the answer is inservice training, it will end up being another thing that we've failed at if a program doesn't work out. Finger pointing has got to stop and we've got to come up with some way to improve upon the resources available in the community."

With every new crisis, the old argument is resurrected that "schools can't be everything." In practice, though, more demands are being made on schools and teachers. A tendency to blame the schools for all social ills may have abated, but a tendency to look to education for remedy has not.

More than one teacher interviewed said, "The schools can't go it alone."

What Kinds of State Programs Help?

Programs that consider the whole child have been found to be most effective. The issue can be teen pregnancy, substance abuse or youth suicide. The approach, however, must be multi-dimensional.

The information collected through the ECS at-risk youth survey from over 70 state teen pregnancy program coordinators indicates that teen pregnancy represents an intergenerational continuum of under education. Studies in a number of states show that illiterate adults tend to come from homes affording little opportunity for shared learning activities. The likelihood

that the children of under-educated teenagers will lead successful, productive lives is not very promising.

In the late 1970s, when U.S. Senator Edward Kennedy first proposed a federal office of adolescent pregnancy, he found a comprehensive model in the state of Delaware. In 1968, with $22,000 in seed money from the Junior League, the **Delaware Adolescent Program, Inc. (DAPI)** began as an alternative school for pregnant young women in a poor Wilmington neighborhood. It has since evolved into a statewide collaborative program with an annual budget of $390,000, generated by state, federal and private foundation sources. A nonprofit agency under the United Way umbrella, it receives administrative assistance from the state Department of Public Instruction and the Department of Public Health.

Unlike typical "pull-out" programs, DAPI, as it is known, offers multiple services without disrupting a student's basic education. The program has several components:

- The medical program offers on-site obstetrical care and a well-baby clinic for children up to 3 years of age. Family planning clinics for young men and women up to age 20 include testing and treatment, childbirth classes to prepare students for labor and delivery and prenatal nutrition counseling.

- The social services program provides counseling for individuals and couples as well as for expectant fathers and extended families. A follow-up component supports the teen mother in her new role. To prepare her for the responsibilities she will encounter once she returns to her community school, DAPI builds upon support in the home, school and community.

- The education program allows pregnant students to complete requirements toward high school graduation, with all credits earned at the alternative school applied to the community school.

- Prevention and outreach programs presented in schools, organizations and church groups help reduce the high incidence of teen pregnancy.

- Licensed day-care facilities enable young mothers to return to their community school as well as to learn parenting skills.

- The program provides transportation or bus tickets for students unable to get to the facilities. DAPI operates three sites in Delaware serving about one-third of the state's pregnant teens.

Similarly, a teen pregnancy initiative in Illinois called **Parents Too Soon (PTS)** began with a coalescing of scattered interests in 1980. That year, the Coalition of Women Legislators held statewide hearings that fueled legislation creating a Task Force on Adolescent Parent Support Services. In 1982 -- the year the public-private sector task force issued a report with 40 recommendations for a comprehensive program -- the "Ounce of Prevention Fund" was established by the Department of Children and Family Services and Irving Harris of the Pittway Corporation Charitable Foundation. Essentially a child abuse and neglect prevention initiative, the "Ounce of Prevention Fund" served mainly teen mothers. That same year, the Department of Public Aid and the Children's Policy Research Group at the University of Chicago released a joint study on 2,000 teenage welfare mothers, strongly endorsing the need for expanded services.

In 1983, Governor James R. Thompson's task force on children and the human services sub-cabinet suggested the formation of a statewide collaboration. PTS was launched with federal dollars from the Emergency Jobs Bill. "Unprecedented collaboration is what has made Parents Too Soon an innovation in program initiatives," says coordinator Linda Miller. "The effectiveness of this collaboration is why our program is currently being replicated in half a dozen other states and is being used as a model in the National Governors' Association's welfare-reform subcommittee on teenage pregnancy."

Miller coordinates the program under the direction of a state "triumvirate" composed of the directors of the Departments of Public Health, Public Aid and Children and Family Services. Each department assumes a portion of programmatic responsibility, but PTS has a single, unified budget -- $12 million for fiscal 1987 -- presented for approval to the General Assembly jointly by the three department heads.

"This joint oversight approach extends to the community level," Miller explains. "Collaboration among local agencies is required. In order to receive Parents Too Soon funding, local agencies must provide letters of agreement with related youth-serving agencies in their communities. They must agree to formally refer participants among themselves, and they are strongly encouraged to collaboratively plan activities," Miller adds. "Collaboration is the key to our success and the only real hope we have for reducing the problem of teenage pregnancy."

PTS now coordinates and sponsors more than 125 community-based projects. There is a wide variety of both treatment and prevention programs. Comprehensive services are provided by public health centers, hospitals, public schools, church-affiliated service centers and social service and mental health agencies. Some of the projects address family planning, prenatal care and parental support. Two major programs are designed to equip teenage mothers on welfare with the job skills necessary to leave public dependency and to establish financial self-sufficiency. Prevention activities include parental approved school based clinics. Locally run conferences help teens develop decision-making skills. PTS conducts demonstration projects to improve teens' communication with their parents and efforts are being made to create community coalitions. The initiative addresses the needs of both males and females between the ages of 10 and 20 years. In the past year, Miller reports, more than 31,000 teens were reached through direct services.

"And we're seeing a difference," Miller continues. "We are seeing fewer repeat pregnancies. Birth weights of program participants' babies are higher than their community averages. More are completing their educations and training programs. More are finding work and ending welfare dependency. Their infants are healthier, more verbal and more curious than the children of nonparticipants in similar environments."

The state's commitment of $12 million in local taxpayer money "makes this the most generously supported state program of its kind in the United States," Miller concludes.

What is so Different About Collaboration as a Policy Tool?

It doesn't place the burden of problem-solving solely on the schools. It involves the entire community working together to provide services or resolve problems for at-risk youth.

Because the problems of today's youth are multi-dimensional, different groups must be part of the solutions. To work together effectively, the varying perspectives of many groups and individuals must be shared in order to break down the problems into manageable tasks.

"There are so many pieces to the at-risk issue," says Max Snowden, coordinator for **Project Spark**, an Arkansas collaboration for at-risk youth policy development. "If we just impact on the school, we are going to take care of one part of it. But if we limit that impact to the school, some of the problems and needs that kids have -- or some of the things that cause kids to quit school -- are not going to be addressed."

"Further," Snowden continues, "schools have limited resources and expertise. When the schools feel that they can't address a real critical need that a particular child has, there must be a service provider that can be identified quickly in the immediate area that can deliver. We've got to try to look at the total child and be sure that we bring in all the existing community efforts. This also allows each community to tailor solutions to its own needs and populations."

Convened by Governor Bill Clinton, three Project Spark committees are made up of representatives from the business community, state legislature, education (e.g., school administrators, teachers and students), youth services and private foundations to look at business-school links, review current school policies and identify community resources and gaps in existing services. Project Spark, as a collaboration, has the mission of determining effective policy for keeping kids in school, thereby assuring a constant work force.

In Massachusetts, cooperative ventures in education policy development have long been encouraged by the presence of a joint House and Senate Committee on Education. In addition, the often-cited **Boston Compact** has provided a working model of municipal and business commitment to education, replicated elsewhere in the state. But partnerships and alliances on a statewide level began to form when individual legislators, members of the governor's staff, educators and representatives from private industry helped to push through an education improvement package in 1985 that, among other innovations, established a buffet of self-help grants for communities with high concentrations of at-risk youngsters. These alliances were further strengthened with the formation of a **Commission on the Conditions of Teaching**. That group recommended legislation to provide incentives for the creation of "Carnegie Schools," which will operate along the management philosophy advocated in A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century.

In tandem with collaborative efforts in health care and welfare reform in Massachusetts, and coupled with aggressive economic recovery initiatives throughout New England, a clear agenda for state leadership began to fall in place. The challenge of an employment explosion has added unusual dimension to the drop out dilemma.

"Massachusetts can credibly argue that every literate young person can be absorbed into the local labor force," says Robert Schwartz, special assistant for educational affairs to Governor Michael S. Dukakis. "But Massachusetts will have 43% fewer 19-year-olds in 1993 than it had in 1983. This means we will need every young person to be well prepared and able to participate in our economic life."

With the need for a formal collaboration apparent, a "Work Group" was convened to help design and implement a statewide drop out prevention strategy. The **Commonwealth Futures** project brought together staff from the state departments of education, youth services, public welfare and employment, as well as the governor's offices of training and employment policy, human services, educational affairs and economic development. Additional assistance came from local public school officials, staff with the federal government's regional education laboratory and faculty from Brandeis University, a private institution.

During its first year, Commonwealth Futures identified 20 Massachusetts communities with high concentrations of at-risk youth, created a resource kit to assist broad-based local planning teams and initiated policy changes that resulted in new, statewide Jobs Training Partnership Act eligibility standards for young people. Six first-round communities have developed comprehensive plans to link existing programs and resources for effective local youth-serving systems. Their plans include a central clearinghouse for community-wide information and referral, the creation or expansion of 9th Grade cluster programs and in-school, as well as community-based, credit-granting alternative schools. One city is creating a "decision-making group" composed of the mayor, public school superintendent, local Private Industry Council chair and a representative from the Governor's Office of Human Services to oversee a multi-grade-level case management system that includes experiential curricula and support services.

Who Keeps the Momentum Alive?

The momentum is maintained by leaders from every political level who have global understanding of the problem and are committed to search for solutions through systemic change.

Much of the impetus for this paper is found in two previous reports by the Education Commission of the States. In Reconnecting Youth, Richard Heckert, vice chairman of the board for E.I. du Pont de Nemours & Co., makes the observation that "the difference between an extraordinarily good program in some community and one that isn't working very well in another is a few outstanding leaders. They may be teachers, they may be administrators, they may be industry people, they may be parents -- but they are people who simply say in our community, 'We are going to have good education. And whatever it takes, we are going to provide it.'"

In Speaking of Leadership, Bill Clinton argues that leadership has become a community responsibility, no longer vested in a single individual or office. Clinton abandons both the vertical hierarchy and horizontal leadership models, using instead the very structure of nature to illustrate his notion of how collaboration makes leadership a community property as well. "The spiral of leadership opportunity I envision," he writes, "pulls schools, districts and states together -- in a kind of double helix model."

There is yet to be seen a collaborative effort that functions perfectly, but there is reason for encouragement. The Illinois Parents Too Soon initiative is cited not only as a model teen pregnancy program but also as a model collaboration project. In this case, enough "community of purpose" had already found some medium of expression so that the final institutionalizing process -- the act of the governor signing it into being -- evolved quite naturally.

Collaboration, like learning itself, is a new growth area that is stimulated the more it's practiced. Action to facilitate collaboration at the state and local levels has been approached

from several angles. In many states the office of the governor -- if not the governor -- has been instrumental in forming collaborations. In some states the legislature has placed its stamp of approval on an already existing collaborative project or activated the machinery after public hearings. In others, grassroots efforts and private interests have recognized certain needs in the community and have formed comprehensive programs to address them.

One approach to collaboration may be to involve the governor of the state. Perceived as the state's advocate for the public interest, a governor is in the position of acting as the "grand convener" who can bring people together who would otherwise not meet. "People who want to keep their jobs participate when the governor makes a request," says Suzanne Sennett, coordinator of the **New York State Council on Children and Families**, a multi-service, interagency program established by executive order in 1977. "It is inconceivable, at this level, to decline to participate in an effort when asked under executive direction," she says.

Governor Mario Cuomo "asked" the commissioners of all state human service agencies to sit on the council. His own budget has provided for 20 permanent staff and another 30 occasional employees and consultants. First Lady Matilda Cuomo is honorary chair and the governor's secretary has lead responsibility for council activities.

According to executive order, the council is charged with developing "more efficient organization and operation of the state/local, public/voluntary system of social, educational, mental health and other supportive and rehabilitative services to children and families. It initiates discussion and resolution of issues among state agencies and initiates coordinating programs to address the problems confronting contemporary families."

Since convening 10 years ago, the council has become somewhat institutionalized, but not overly bureaucratic. Some key issues still being raised by the group are:

- How to stop treating kids serially based on the program to which they may be entitled. "Kids are not born with labels," says Sennett, "but we tend to lose them because we superimpose labels on them to get them to fit into a particular program."

- How to create an environment in which service providers can better facilitate programs for kids.

According to Sennett, "Key members of the public and private sectors of the youth services delivery system have established face-to-face relationships during council activities. This enhancement of working relationships has greatly improved the level of cooperation between service providers in their day-to-day practice, and especially where it counts -- improved coordination at the case level."

State legislation, in some cases, has been instrumental in expanding resources so that state/community teams can better aid youth. Similar to the Illinois PTS program, a second statewide collaboration working closely with the New York council began as a classic grassroots initiative until interest escalated into a legislative mandate. The intent of the **Persons In Need of Supervision (PINS) Adjustment Services Act** is to divert youth and their families from the judicial system to preventive and community-based services. Enacted statewide, PINS operates through local government and public service agency jurisdiction.

"The PINS diversion program grew out of a realization that in too many cases the courts were not helping these kids," explains Pat Henry, of the New York City Mayor's Advisory Office for Criminal Justice. "There was a realization that all the people and groups that

should be dealing with the case must get involved. From the board of education people there had to be discussion of how we were currently dealing with the dropout populations, how we were dealing with truancy as a policy issue, what kinds of ways can we develop comprehensive programs for these young people in the overall education plan."

"By addressing the needs of the particular population," she continues, "by pulling together all of those people who have responsibilities for youth programming and planning, we've been able to force some issues."

A third approach is that taken by the individual service providers or department commissioners. In Alaska, teachers, administrators, case workers and program directors from the education, community affairs and health departments had regularly met on an informal basis to discuss varying perspectives on some problems in early childhood development. They soon learned that an innovative solution proposed by one agency could produce obstacles for another, especially in a state the size of Alaska where many communities and districts are in rural, isolated regions. They were convinced they should be meeting on a formal basis and they convinced their respective commissioners as well.

The **Tri-Department Committee on Young Children** was formed in 1982. The group is chaired on a rotating basis by the individual commissioners or their designees from the Department of Education, the Department of Community and Regional Affairs and the Department of Health and Social Services. Meetings rotate between Juneau and Anchorage, and often via audio or teleconference. Commissioners determine how much of their individual departmental budgets will be set aside to cover their share of the collaboration. The committee itself has no funding.

The Tri-Department Committee recently received a $100,000 technical assistance grant from the National Association of State Boards of Education. "It became clear to the national association that this group was working together, that they were not doing isolated things that would work against the common goals of the group," says Kathi Wineman, an early childhood curriculum specialist with the Alaska Department of Education. "Because the committee was willing to work together, there has been a greater impetus to take on bigger things -- things bigger than any one department could do alone."

"In the individual agencies, the opportunity to be in touch with the activities of other departments and to utilize the resources and efforts of different divisions has helped create a holistic change rather than a change just within one agency," she adds.

The Tri-Department Committee coordinates the policies and regulations governing all three departments so that any change in the regulations of one department does not interfere with the efficient provision of services for children elsewhere. "It is important," continues Wineman, "that whenever there is a change in regulations from one department that the committee determine what implications the changes will have for the regulations in other departments. This is especially important when any of the three departments goes up for hearings with community groups." The committee also has discussed combining the child-care and education regulations of all three departments. "The existing three sets tend to be confusing to those in the field," she says.

The Tri-Department Committee often has found itself collaborating with other state departments and agencies as well. It has coordinated formal agreements, for example, with the Department of Commerce, Division of Insurance to assist child-care providers in obtaining insurance.

The committee is cooperating with another state collaboration, Governor Steve Cowper's **Interim Commission on Children and Youth**. Two levels of interest -- the work of individual agency staff, coupled with legislative and broader public support -- converged even before Cowper took office. A Steering Committee is composed of representatives from the Departments of Education, Community and Regional Affairs and Health and Social Services as well as the Departments of Law and Public Safety. Two task forces are at work -- one to design "a first-class comprehensive child care system, which is fair and accessible and interfaces with the public school system" and the other to look at "barriers that prohibit Alaskan adolescents from being economically and emotionally self-sufficient."

The commission is made up of representatives from the five state departments, six legislators and 11 service providers, including a physician, a social worker and a school administrator. "The public representatives were chosen because they were the type of people who could think beyond a particular problem," says Annie Calkins, an early childhood education specialist with the Alaska Department of Education. More than 200 resumes were submitted to the governor's office for the position of director. A Fairbanks public defender specializing in family law, former state assistant attorney general Neisje Steinkruger, was appointed to chair the commission. Anchorage physician Dr. Peter Scales serves as vice-chair. What's more, one of the six legislative members has formed a bi-partisan children's caucus of 23 legislators who now meet on a weekly basis.

The commission was to issue final recommendations to Cowper in January 1988. A federal grant from the Youth 2000 Program will be used to start three collaborative efforts to provide services for at-risk youth among the native population in rural areas of Alaska.

"The commission's recommendations to the governor include some specific strategies for dealing with interagency collaboration, reorganization and better service delivery for every program serving at-risk youth," says Calkins. "Among the examples of the collaborative strategies we recommend is to make a course in parenting, bringing in the health component, a high school graduation requirement."

How Does Collaboration Make for Better Learning?

Collaboration encourages creativity and risk-taking. When adults organize themselves in new ways, they can create a positive learning environment enabling students to acquire the expanded range of skills, knowledge and attitudes they need. The perspectives and approaches of diverse groups are essential to create this positive environment.

In its September 1987 report Children in Need, the Committee for Economic Development eloquently builds a case around three "investment strategies" -- early intervention, restructuring the schools and retention and reentry programs. Not any one, it is argued, can adequately do the job alone.

The focus on at-risk youngsters has since been heralded as the "third wave" of education reform. But now, toward the end of the 1980s, it is appropriate to stop and ask:

- What range of knowledge, skills and values will be necessary for life in the 1990s?
- What kind of learning climate is necessary if students are to achieve these characteristics?

- How can collaboration help create this environment, ensuring the participation and success of all our young people?

In restructured schools across the country administrators have discovered that the innovations of empowered staff can create better learning environments for students. A principal at a restructured elementary school in Cerritos, California, asks us to imagine a young student who is asthmatic, overweight, limited English proficient, comes from an economically disadvantaged home, has apparent learning, speech and motor problems. Add to this an interest in joining the school band.

"Obviously a gross exaggeration, there are indeed real students in the schools that do participate in multiple programs and endure the splintering of their school day into numerous classroom visitations with countless specialists," says Suzanne Soo Hoo, former principal at Palms Elementary School.

One day, Soo Hoo and a member of her faculty "shadowed" a special education student and found the child had spent more time between classes than in them. The youngster was asked to respond "to six different adults in six different classrooms with six different sets of classroom behavioral standards," she reports. "Academically and socially," Soo Hoo continues, "the negative outweighs any positive outcomes for such students. But the condition affects not only students. There are questionable consequences for teachers as well. What exists is an illusion that these services and programs make a beneficial impact on schools." Soo Hoo concludes that "as teachers become more accustomed to services provided by specialists, the need to expand their skills diminishes."

Five years ago, two first-grade teachers approached Soo Hoo with a proposal that students be assigned to classes for two years. Students would remain not only with the same teacher but also with their same "friendship clusters," the teachers argued. Students would also gain an additional five weeks of learning time by not having to gear up in September or down in June, preparing for a brand-new teacher.

"With the help of their kindergarten teacher colleagues, these two observed kindergarten students in the classrooms and on the playground to identify friendship clusters," writes Soo Hoo. "The idea behind this was to further cultivate established social groupings by giving them the opportunity to stay together for a period of two years, rather than subject them to the annual harvest mix and divide them up."

At the end of the second year, an additional six faculty members signed on with the Continuous Learning Program, and schoolwide collaboration was under way. As a group, teachers soon discovered other areas requiring thoughtful examination.

"It was like cracking the door open of a closet and watching all the junk fall out," Soo Hoo recalls. "Suddenly, spilling out of our school closet was an avalanche of stratified school practices that had gone unquestioned for years."

During those five years, the faculty at Palms Elementary developed a philosophy that their school is "the unit of change" that can make a difference in a child's life. The school functions using "a collaborative process where faculty members identify issues and propose alternatives in an innovative and playful environment. Its essence is trust, dialogue and risk-taking. We refer to this belief system and process as 'renewal,'" says Soo Hoo.

Innovation at Palms has led to measurable change. Standardized test scores and other traditional yardsticks of achievement have shown positive gains. Soo Hoo reports that although these gains cannot be directly linked to the operational changes at the school, the fact that scores did not drop while changes were being implemented appears significant.

"My forecast is that renewing educators who believe in a process of reflection and self-examination, collaboration and empowerment will eventually identify all those conditions that frustrate learning," Soo Hoo concludes.

What are the Barriers to Collaboration?

Many.

Long-term benefits of collaboration are far less visible than the short-term costs. Slow starts, institutional posturing, external interference, "turf" disputes and entirely new layers of stress are some of the front-end costs reported by different collaborations.

"We have to tackle mindsets on how a problem should be resolved," says the director of a state interagency program in the Northeast. "Consensus-building often means doing a lot of whining."

"There's too damn much to do and too little time to come up with the recommendations the governor wants by the end of the year," the director of a collaborative task force in one Southern state says. "As a consequence," he adds, "we have been forced to prioritize the issues that will have immediate impact, policies that can be implemented next year."

A recurring problem for one interagency collaboration is that limited resources often prevent agency administrators from actually participating in meetings. "The committee needs the people in directorship or power positions to attend the meetings," says a coordinator for that project. "Often, however, a money issue gets in the way. The programs people need to attend the meetings to find out about current research and activities in the field. Agencies can't afford to send more than one person."

In many states a willingness to collaborate is widespread. Lacking, however, is a willingness from one department or agency to make a first move without knowing in advance how other agencies will respond. As a result, many meetings are held, minutes are taken and hours are wasted. "The group has not shown any resistance to collaboration, but there has been some resistance from inside the departments because it is difficult to move bureaucracy," says the coordinator of one project. "Because the people who sit on the committee are programs people, they cannot make the final decisions. All decisions must go back through the hierarchy of the various departments, which ends up taking a fair amount of time since there tends to be some resistance to making a commitment."

In a related study on adult literacy services, ECS has found that state-sponsored programs are primarily driven by funding compliance. Attention to student needs is more often a secondary consideration in program development. This is the case for many collaborative programs aimed at coordinating multiple services for at-risk youngsters. "Each agency functions under varying funding streams," says the director of a statewide council on the East Coast. "When trying to coordinate to provide holistic approaches, the particular funding streams may get in the way of meeting a need. For example, if a program is funded by

assessing the amount of time spent per child, it creates a disincentive to spend time on the telephone trying to network for services."

Well-founded but inflexible policies, such as those relating to privacy and other civil liberties, can pose major obstacles for collaborative strategies. "It makes sense for the state to get involved, but there is always a trade-off," adds the coordinator of a juvenile justice program. "When government gets involved in service delivery, government sometimes creates roadblocks to service." Social service agencies report that they try to deal with children in protective networks. When, for example, kids are suspected of being abused or neglected, the agencies often request much confidential information about the family -- information that can't be shared with other organizations trying to deal with the same families. "Every bureaucracy sets up its own policies and guidelines from which it operates," the coordinator continues. "They set them up in a way that they believe makes sense. What's happened is, we have set up all kinds of ways that stop us from effectively dealing with kids, and most of the time for very good reasons. Confidential information, for example, should not be shared with everyone who might be interested in it -- but we have to be very careful in government not to police ourselves right out of service delivery."

A lack of vision and an inability to change gears when the situation requires can stall any collaborative effort. Asked to define collaboration, the coordinator of a statewide task force on teen pregnancy doesn't actually use the word "flexibility," but says, "Collaboration changes depending upon the project, the goals. Sometimes collaboration means getting on the phone to a person in a particular agency to get an answer, such as when a young person is identified as having a problem with drugs. A call from a school counselor to someone in a health clinic or a call to the Department of Health and Human Services for an appropriate program referral -- is a collaborative effort. Sometimes it requires executive direction to pull people together to identify issues needing support. Sometimes, it is a community pooling resources and identifying needs. Whatever, however, collaboration is the process of networking to ensure that services are provided efficiently and effectively."

In a Southern state, a project director reports that legislation is too often void of flexibility, and he doubts its overall effectiveness. "Here, in this state, there are not enough local grassroots organizations with enough power in enough places to move this agenda to the level that it has to be moved," he says. "So, what that brings us down to is state policy -- not legislation. I worry about legislation because it is too rigid. With policy there is built-in flexibility. It is malleable. It can be changed as the times require, but it's still in place. People know that it's there and once it gets in, and once people have become accustomed to it, they will operate under its precepts," he concludes.

In at least three cases, misplaced priorities virtually killed collaborative programs and compounded problems in servicing at-risk kids. In one state, a governor appointed a collaborative party to focus on early childhood and adolescent issues. Following the governor's failed bid for re-election, the council was disbanded by a new administration. When the former governor was returned to office, a new council was instated, with a larger mandate in order to recover lost ground.

In a second state, a sound, comprehensive at-risk effort, initiated by a former governor, was reorganized by a new governor to reflect his ideology. The program had enjoyed popular support from the legislature and the education and social services sectors. Task force members now report that under the new administration, its effectiveness is in jeopardy. Similarly, in a third state, the recommendations of a statewide governor's task force on adult literacy were given scant consideration by his successor.

On the other hand, Democrats in the Illinois General Assembly quickly reached bipartisan consensus, foregoing conciliatory rhetoric about a seemingly intractable situation and backed their Republican governor's bold plan to help pregnant teens. "The Parents Too Soon initiative has operated from the outset under the strong leadership and personal involvement of Governor Thompson, a Republican," says coordinator Linda Miller. "And, from the outset, the initiative has received the strong and consistent backing of the General Assembly, controlled by Democrats. It is unanimous. We are united in our desire to reduce teen pregnancy and its negative impacts."

It is naive, though, to think that anything to do in any remote way with adolescent sex is not political dynamite. In Illinois, contention has surfaced among conservative religious and civic organizations over school-based clinics. In other states, parents are taking school districts to court over issues relating to adolescent health care and throughout the country, Roman Catholic bishops have mounted an aggressive editorial campaign to stop the spread of school-based clinics.

Local parent resistance in another state prevented a collaborative program that would help kids through their multiple problems in one school district from ever getting off the ground. Part of the program focused on teen pregnancy and was to include day-care and counseling for both the teen mother and father. "Parents were up in arms claiming such a program looked bad for the school, that the program was unnecessary, that it was morally wrong, that the school was reinforcing inappropriate behavior in the kids, that we were telling kids it's okay to get pregnant," a teacher confirms. "The parents destroyed it."

Faculty reaction to at-risk programs can cause yet another barrier. In the teenage pregnancy program just discussed, the mixed reaction of the faculty to the program also contributed to its collapse. Most were in favor of the plan, but reluctant to go to bat for it. "Many want the school to be known as an academic institution, and a lot of teachers are closing their eyes to problems that exist outside of class," says one teacher. "Ideally, they only want to deal with the kids that are there to learn. A teen pregnancy program just did not interest them."

How Does An Effective Collaboration Begin?

The process starts with a common issue, a reason to pull people together to discuss and share ideas, information and opinions and a group ready to take a chance.

Collaboration begins with the selection of the resource people in state and local government and the community who have experience in dealing with the particular issue, understand the common goal, have the authority and power to influence change and have the energy and enthusiasm for keeping the momentum alive. Next, it means determining the appropriate forum for collecting the appropriate information, organizing groups around manageable projects, creating the mission and implementing the means for its accomplishment. And, as trite as it may sound, it also means trust. That doesn't mean that individuals or institutions will abandon well-founded caution when they agree to collaborate with one another. They will tread lightly. Trust means dispensing with dogma in favor of genuine critique. In the successful collaborations reviewed here, some level of trust -- or at the minimum, respect -- was present prior to any formal arrangements. In all cases, this sentiment -- shared, but in unequal portions -- has matured.

"Our biggest problem was creating a common langauge, a kind of esperanto that we would all agree to use," recalls a former member of a collaborative task force in a Western state. "Once over that hurdle, we found we could more easily agree on what data we were going to use, who was going to collect it and what the data meant. Trust was a natural byproduct of the collaborative process."

"My leadership style has changed dramatically over the years," says Principal Soo Hoo. "I restrained my inclination to implement quick fixes in order to provide my teachers with the opportunity to discover their own answers. Oftentimes, I'm still discomforted with the ambiguity of this process, so I concentrate instead on listening and building a climate of trust. If teachers are willing to take a risk and do some 'possibility thinking,' I know it needs to be in a highly supportive, penalty-free environment."

Building upon already existing efforts saves time, resources and creates strong working relationships between agencies. Oregon's Governor Neil Goldschmidt appended the Governor's **Student Retention Initiative** to two existing efforts at the state and local levels (**The Oregon Youth Coordinating Council** and **The Juvenile Services Commission**). Not only was start-up time greatly reduced, but participants in the collaboration report that the additional support has helped them move the whole agenda along.

As demonstrated, several states have initiated the collaborative process with mixed levels of success. Some, such as Alaska and Arkansas have chosen the umbrella approach under executive or legislative direction. Others have convened grassroots meetings of key practioners from every sector in the state to identify problems and help develop intervention strategies. Though approached from different avenues, every effort has a common point of intersection: to negotiate strategies among diverse and sometimes contrasting community groups, practitioners and service providers, to hammer out the issues and resolve them.

CONCLUSION

Given the nature of social machinery, collaboration could easily be used to circumvent issues and evade responsibilities altogether. There have been so many task forces and blue-ribbon panels with lots of bright and caring men and women set out amidst a flurry of attention to "ask the tough questions," or "tackle the issues." A year or so later, their efforts have produced -- at best -- a collection of interesting ideas or catchy slogans -- at worst -- a final report, riddled with alarmist rhetoric and tired homilies, concluding that further study to reiterate past effort is what's needed. This is the kind of lip service that exhausts any sense of credibility.

On the other hand, collaboration could well be the social machinery that translates good intentions into action, interest into involvement.

First, collaboration does <u>not</u> mean the abdication of individual responsibility. Whether a governor, a state schools chief or district superintendent, a department head or a school principal, it comes with the job. The leader who goes out on a limb should expect to take the heat. But collaboration and the collective ownership that results from it is a formidable power against special interests.

"The bottom line is that through the process of collaboration, you're going to have a much broader exchange of ideas," says Max Snowden with Arkansas' Project Spark. "It's critical to have that exchange because, as much as one person thinks that he or she understands the

broad issues, there are lots of others who see them from a different perspective. Without the collaborative effort, there can be no ownership in what has to be done, and the ownership that results from collaboration will be helpful in moving the issues as a political item."

Second, collaboration does not mean relegating leadership duties to an indecisive politburo. "I learned to appreciate the benefits of shifting control to teachers and becoming comfortable with the few knowns and the greater uncertainties that typifies renewal," says Principal Suzanne Soo Hoo. "A large part of my job is to be the chief worrier about the culture of our school that would foster these talks."

"We're all inclined toward the quick fix," remarks a statewide task force director. "It is difficult for some members of the task force to have that global understanding of all the impacting variables and all the issues that have to be really touched upon before we can have an integrated thrust. It places me in the position, as coordinator, of having to explain what we need to do, and to explain why we're doing it, in order to get that upfront investment."

And finally, collaboration can be a force greater than the sum of its parts. "Many times, solving problems becomes very fragmented and people can only deal with the things that are right in front of them," explains Pat Henry with the New York City PINS diversion program. Many agencies are oftentimes dealing with the same types of problems. By gathering together the different people who are working on common issues, a structure can be created to select a common goal, a common plan, a real agenda. Henry adds, "we're not just convening so we can talk. We have a mandate to fill, we have programs that are funded and we have to account for them. We are interested, really interested, in finding out just what is happening -- where, for example, families are headed, how many cases can be diverted from the courts, how many cases are dropping out of the system. We can then begin to do some real long-range planning, in terms of what works, what types of programs will make a difference for these kids."

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

THE EDUCATION COMMISSION OF THE STATES WORKING PARTY ON BUILDING COLLABORATIVE STRATEGIES TO SERVE YOUTH AT-RISK

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